

Taken from the Santa Fe New Mexican

Learn how to plant native grasses

Native grasses are a great way to restore wildlife habitat, control erosion and foster riparian areas. But where is the best place to plant and what helps native grasses thrive?

The USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service this week released its new publication, *Seeding Native Grasses in the Arid Southwest*. This booklet covers the factors that influence successful native grass seeding in New Mexico and neighboring states.

"Native grass seeding is an uncertain endeavor even in the best of circumstances, but in the arid Southwest it is an extremely risky venture," said David Dreesen, agronomist at the NRCS Los Lunas Plant Materials Center and the publication's author.

The brochure offers advice to farmers, ranchers, conservationists and even urban dwellers looking to restore native grasses.

"A common mistake in seeding warm season native grasses in New Mexico is planting in the spring," Dreesen said, because the seeds need about six weeks of moisture to germinate and establish. So the best period is usually during the monsoons of July and August.

Seeding depth, soil compaction, seed-to-soil-particle contact, mulching, soil texture, weed control and the cool- or warm-season nature of the species are included in the publication.

The brochure is available online at www.nm.nrcs.usda.gov or by contacting your local NRCS Field Office.